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PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #2325/01 3311759
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 261759Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4557
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1521
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PRIORITY 0508
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 0339
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002325

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/C, INL/AEE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/25/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KCOR](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH YAKUBU ON RIBADU AND OTHER ISSUES

REF: A. ABUJA 2307

[1](#)B. PIASCIK E-MAIL OF NOVEMBER 24

[1](#)C. ABUJA 2249

[1](#)D. STATE 125135

Classified By: Ambassador Robin Renee Sanders for Reasons 1.4. (b & d)

1.(C) Ambassador met with Presidential Special Advisor on Economics and other issues, Tanimu Yakubu, on November 26, to discuss a range of US-Nigerian issues, but principally incidents surrounding former EFCC Chairman Nuhu Ribadu, expressing USG concerns over what appears to be constant harassment of the former chairman. Ambassador also spoke with close Presidential confidant Kwara Governor Bukola Saraki about Ribadu on November 21 prior to the incidents at Ribadu's graduation. In the Saraki discussion, she noted that the USG would be renewing Ribadu's visa, and that she hoped that there would not be any intentional efforts to bar him from travel if he so desired. As for Yakubu, given that he has President Yar'Adua's ear, we are certain that our concerns on these issues also will reach him in a timely manner. Yakubu said he would be meeting Yar'Adua evening of November 26, prior to his London travel.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador recounted her understanding of the events surrounding Ribadu's November 22 graduation ceremony and what is being viewed by the USG as harassment. Yakubu stated clearly that the harassment of Ribadu was not a policy direction by the Villa and that the first the Villa heard about the incidents was also in the press. He brought to the attention of the Ambassador, the GON statement issued after the event hit the press, underscoring again that President Yar'Adua did not and would not direct such petty action, nor was anyone else in government instructed to behave in such a manner. Yakubu then recounted the GON version of what they understood took place. He began by admitting that there were still a lot of "old think" in the GON military, police and security sectors where they behaved in a way contrary to democratic principles and actions. The incident with Ribadu is a case in point. No one told them to treat Ribadu in this way.

[1](#)3. (C) Yakubu added, however, that Ribadu also complicates things as well. Both his visit to the Villa recently to meet the President, and his participation at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) ceremonies called for official dress uniform (police and or military) by all government personnel in the police and or military

services. Ribadu refused to show up at the Villa in the right protocol dress, and afterwards he was informed that it was insulting to the Office of the President for him to be the sole participant out of uniform. He later was asked to ensure that for the NIPSS graduation that he be in dress uniform just like all other officers. Ribadu, according to Yakubu, did not come in the front door with his classmates, but came in a back entrance to avoid not being allowed in because he was out of uniform. Despite Ribadu's insubordination on two occasions, no one directed, particularly the President, for him to be harassed or mistreated. The press reports that he was whisked away to an undisclosed location are erroneous as he was not taken away from NIPSS or to any detention site as was reported, Yakubu stated. (Note: Ribadu's conversation with the DCM also confirms that he was not whisked away to an undisclosed location, but rather escorted from the graduation ceremony. End Note) Ribadu did receive his NIPSS certificate in the end at the direction of the Villa because the President was so annoyed at what had happened, he summed up.

14. (C) Ambassador said, be that as it may, Nigeria is "shooting itself in the foot" on this issue as there is a lot of concern about Ribadu's treatment and his overall safety. Clearly he is being harassed with the demotion in grade to deputy inspector and on other fronts. Yakubu again fell back on the argument that Ribadu has to work out his issues through the courts with his agency, as he is doing on the question of his rank demotion. But in the meantime, the Special Advisor added, he is still in the Nigerian police force (NPF), and until these issues are resolved through the courts on his demotion, he has to follow the police protocol

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and orders. (Note: Ribadu told Ambassador and the DCM in an earlier meeting that he would report to his Bayelsa State assignment although it was below grade given that he was still a civil servant. However, he also said he had not gotten paid for the last three months, which we see as another form of harassment).

15. (C) Ambassador restated our concerns about Ribadu's safety. Yakubu assured the Ambassador that there is no policy or intent, directed by the President or any one else believing in what Yar'Adua's policies are to harass or hurt Ribadu. Further on this issue, in a November 24 short meeting with the DCM, Ribadu did note some concern over his safety given that he thought certain "thugs from Benue State," who are following him, may try to do something foolish to continue to harass him or more seriously hurt him (ref B).

16. (C) Comment: There are conflicting stories over what actually happened at NIPSS. Some of it has to do with Ribadu himself as he probably chose not to observe the graduation ceremony protocols because he did not want to wear the lower ranked uniform. However, we have put markers down across the board on our concerns about his safety and that we are closely watching this issue. At present, it does not seem to be a matter of policy, at least from the Villa, to intentionally harass him. This is not the case within his home agency, the NPF, and we add mostly likely, Attorney General (AG) Aondoakaa office. It is clearly possible that the AG (who is from Benue State) could have a group of thugs following the former EFCC chairman. The AG, Police Chief Okiro and Ribadu are arch enemies. We have no doubt about the AG's ability to be manipulative as well as participate and sanction inappropriate behavior such as this, on top of his normal illicit enrichment activities.

17. (C) Ribadu is to report to court in Kaduna on the issue of his suit against the GON for his demotion. We assume since he brought the suit he will remain in Nigeria to meet this court date, possibly traveling to the U.S. later. Ribadu does not help himself when he knows that his agency, including the AG, is gunning for him and looking for a reason to hold some regulation and or procedure against him for insubordination

or something else. We will need to see if any of these things can affect his ability to leave the country. We are in regular contact with Ribadu, and will keep the pressure on the GON. The Ambassador will be meeting Foreign Minister Maduekwe on November 29 and will reraise the Ribadu issue as well as our concerns about the GON's missteps with the press as another worrying sign.

18. AMISOM: (C) Ambassador took advantage of the Yakubu meeting to execute ref D demarche on pushing Nigeria to respond soonest on its plans to send a battalion to Somalia and take advantage of the \$3 million USG offer on equipment. Yakubu said he would follow up. Ambassador will also raise this point with the FonMin on November 29 and use the meeting with visiting General Higgins with the new Chief of Defense Staff to push the issues further.

Sanders